United Nations E/CN.5/2012/NGO/5

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
17 November 2011

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Fiftieth session
1-10 February 2012
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: poverty eradication

Statement submitted by World Youth Alliance, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2012/1.

11-59697 (E) 151211

Please recycle

Statement

Poverty eradication takes place at an individual level, by educating and investing in persons and enabling their creativity and natural capacities to develop and flourish. It requires whole communities to work together for the common good. Poverty eradication requires strong families who take seriously their duties and responsibilities in caring for their members and building intergenerational solidarity. On another level, the State is responsible for good governance, curtailing corruption and ensuring that conditions exist for human beings to bring themselves out of poverty and flourish in accordance with their intrinsic dignity.

World Youth Alliance, a global coalition of young people promoting the dignity of the human person in policy and culture, welcomes the opportunity to review the current year's priority theme of the Commission for Social Development, "Poverty eradication". The statement will focus on the importance of the family in helping to eradicate poverty for young people, older persons and persons with disabilities.

The family

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society. Since its adoption, the United Nations community has struggled with the meaning and implications of such recognition. The determination that the family is the fundamental group unit of society necessitates the support and protection of the State, which must recognize the key role of the family in the eradication of poverty.

The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society because it is the place where children are nurtured and raised, thus ensuring the future of society and the State. The family is "natural" because it is prior to the State, and not created by the State. The State must recognize the family as the fundamental unit that enables social functioning and development. The family is therefore both prior to, and necessary for, the development of free, healthy and flourishing societies. Support for the family, because of its importance with regard to social functioning as well as the care and well-being of children, the aged and the most vulnerable, should be provided at the political and the cultural levels.

Youth

Global statistics on the status of young people highlight the need to integrate youth into any poverty eradication agenda. According to the *World Youth Report: Youth and Climate Change*, youth, defined as persons aged 15 to 24, constitute approximately 18 per cent of the total global population (1.2 billion). In many countries of the world, particularly in the developing world, there is a youth majority with the creative potential to transform society.

As a consequence of poverty and the associated absences of adequate health care, education and employment opportunities, much of the creative potential of young people is lost. Approximately 87 per cent of youth live in developing countries. Youth comprise around 40 per cent of the world's unemployed people. Youth literacy rates are below 80 per cent in some parts of Africa and Asia. Today, millions of adolescents, particularly girls, face the prospect of incomplete education,

which increases their chances of living in poverty and of contracting infectious diseases.

The strength of the family is of primary importance to youth because it influences the way they will respond to issues and difficulties in their lives. The encouragement and love a young person experiences in family life are directly related to how well he or she does in school and consequently have an impact on employment opportunities. Therefore, support for the family is essential in recognizing and promoting the rights of young people, especially as they relate to poverty eradication.

Older persons

Older persons are those persons ages 60 or 65 and older, roughly equivalent to retirement ages in most developed countries, although the definition changes from country to country and over time. In the past few decades, issues related to the ageing population have risen to the forefront of the development agenda because of increases in the average lifespan of people throughout the world.

An increasingly ageing population has posed unique demographic and economic challenges due to the fact that as people age they work less and require more health-care services. A proposed solution to the problem presented by older persons who require increased medical care is euthanasia. Under the framework "dying with dignity", assisted suicide is available in some countries to people suffering from chronic physical and mental pain. As assisted suicide becomes more socially and morally acceptable and more available over time, a decrease in political will to provide palliative care and health-care services to older persons will follow. Such decrease in the availability of care for older persons can constitute indirect pressure on them to take their own lives if they believe they have become a burden on society or on their families; this pressure violates their human dignity.

Older persons have traditionally fulfilled the role of educating and passing on values to the younger generation; this role has ensured the progress of humanity and promoted a culture in which intergenerational solidarity fosters the common good, especially the realization of responsibilities towards future generations. In order to maintain this role, the important contributions of older persons to society and social cohesion must be recognized and supported and young people must be educated about the natural ageing process and about the importance of respect for older persons.

Worldwide, the overall responsibility taken by families to provide the ageing with care and support is diminishing. World Youth Alliance therefore stresses that the family as a whole, including its male members, must be enabled to participate in and share the burden of caregiving. Furthermore, the family must serve as the model of solidarity through which humankind can undertake the challenges presented by ageing populations.

Persons with disabilities

According to United Nations Enable, there are approximately 650 million persons with disabilities in the world, 80 per cent of whom live in developing countries, many in conditions of poverty. The isolation of people with disabilities is caused by stigma, discrimination, myths, misconceptions and ignorance. These

problems have a two-way relationship: disability increases the risk of poverty, and conditions of poverty increase the risks of disability. Disability leads to poverty because of limited opportunities for and discrimination against people with disabilities. Conditions of poverty, such as poor sanitation and lack of access to basic health care, in turn lead to increased disability risks. Too often, political and social communities fail to provide the special health care and education necessary for the integral development of persons with disabilities.

The State must promote the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms for disabled persons, which demonstrates respect for the diversity of the human condition. Persons with disabilities are consistently and continually examples of the values of self-improvement and personal development. Their unique contribution to society encourages us to fulfil our duty to aid and protect them.

Both in developed and developing countries, disabled persons are targeted for termination based solely on their disabilities. Genetic diagnosis and prenatal screening technologies are often used to identify persons with disabilities prior to birth. These practices ignore the intrinsic dignity of the human person and are clear violations of human rights. Member States in both developed and developing countries should adopt measures to eradicate these violations of human rights and to promote the integration of disabled persons into society.

Conclusion

Poverty eradication requires recognizing the role that families play in the lives of all persons, including young people, older persons and persons with disabilities. Social and economic development require strong families. World Youth Alliance thus calls on Member States to recognize this role and provide corresponding support for the family.